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ABSTRACT

Designed for use as supplementary instructional material in a cultural anthropology course, this learning module introduces the student to cultural molding, the idea that most human behavior can be traced to enculturation and exposure rather than to a socio-biological explanation of human behavior. Following a brief description of socialization, enculturation and acculturation, the following concepts are described and defined: (1) normative standards; (2) means of exercising social control, such as mores, folkways, story-telling and oral tradition; (3) social roles and the division of labor; (4) role conflict, role acceleration, role traits and means of role acquisition such as achievement and ascription; (5) age roles, including age grading and age-set; (6) the distinction between personal and social roles; (7) deviation, including statistical and legal deviation, subcultural exploitation, and anomie; (8) reference points; and (9) territoriality and social distance. Finally, performance activities covering the module's content are appended. (LAL)

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Cultural Molding

A Modular Approach

Cultural Anthropology
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CULTURAL MOLDING

Introduction:

This module has been prepared as a guide to a specific area within Cultural Anthropology. Your task will be to read the materials, perform the tasks at the end of the module, and to cross check your answers with the information in the module upon completion of the performance activities. It will be your responsibility to keep up with the reading assignments in the textbook, and to take lecture notes,and film notes.

The module is designed to give you a basis for mastering a specific amount of information, and has been field tested with over 1000 students who have demonstrated by their performance on examinations, that the modular approach can increase the probability of student mastery. The theoretical perspective which is employed is based upon cognitive psychology, gestalt psychology, behaviorism and programmed learning.

This module is designed to cover the area of Cultural Molding. The goal of the module is to introduce concepts which relate to socialization and enculturation. The terminology is applicable to both sociology and anthropology. Numerous concepts reinforce the premise that most of the behavior that humans exhibit can be traced to enculturation and exposure rather than a socio-biological explanation of human behavior.

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CULTURAL MOLDING

Anthropologists have long supported the idea that culture is the primary force in molding the individual. People are carriers of culture; therefore, it is important to examine the processes whereby culture is transmitted to group members. SOCIALIZATION of group members involves face to face interaction. In the past, socialization was the primary mechanism for transmitting information from one generation or individual to another. During information transferal and social interaction, another process, termed ENCULTURATION, occurs. Through socialization, a group member learns what is required, and becomes a part of the culture--a carrier of its traits. An enculturated individual is prepared for life within his/her own culture. Sometimes a person must move into another society and adapt to a different culture. In doing so, s/he must learn new ways of behaving and performing tasks. This process is called ACCULTURATION, and is the mechanism which allows previously conditioned individuals to become part of the new culture.

Cultural traits are transmitted to group members in a variety of ways. All groups have limitations on the types of behavior that are deemed appropriate or inappropriate. The molding process sets forth both acceptable and ideal roles and behavior for individuals to assume, and illustrates

the varied mechanisms for social control which can be applied to the individual who violates the NORMATIVE STANDARDS of the group. In the past, when group life frequently was equated with survival, the primary group was responsible for socialization and enculturation. Group pressure was exerted to encourage the individual to conform; scorn, ridicule and the threat of exclusion were (and continue to be) potent methods of social control.

There are a number of ways in which social groups can exercise social control by setting limits. MORES are traditional forms of behavior which are regarded as important; they tend to be pervasive, emerging from the ritual experiences and belief systems of a group, and supporting the central ethos of the culture. The individual is not encouraged to question or challenge their validity. FOLKWAYS are behavior patterns which are relatively commonplace; they are, however, somewhat idiosyncratic for individual cultures. Folkways are not as forceful as mores, and frequent violation does not necessarily elicit a strong negative response from the group. The attitudes and ideas of a people are deeply intertwined with their folkways and mores. Primitive cultures place considerable emphasis upon STORY-TELLING and ORAL TRADITION. Stories are a means of dramatizing essential information; drama imprints the storyline into the memory of the listener. Similar themes are frequently repeated in a number of different stories. This helps to enculturate group members, to reinforce previous enculturation,

and to inculcate the goals of the culture in its individual members. Story telling serves as a mechanism to assure cultural transmission.

SOCIAL ROLES are an integral part of the process by which groups create and categorize expected behavior. The two major divisions of social roles are AGE and SEX. All cultures attach specific traits, rights and obligations to these categories. Role divisions help convey expectations of behavior; socialization exposes group members to required roles. A fundamental division between male and female roles is found in most cultures. In primitive cultures, the DIVISION OF LABOR within a family was traditionally based upon sex. Males and females were expected to perform specific role-related tasks, and opportunities for role exchange or task alternatives were practically non-existent, generally occurring only during times of extreme stress or emergency. At no time was serious consideration given to a permanent or complete exchange of role behavior in categories specifically designated as the domain of one sex.

The technological complexity of contemporary cultures has created options for freeing males and females from many of the more restrictive aspects of biological role assignments. Individuals are released from some traditionally fixed biological imperatives; it is no longer necessary for all females to bear children, nor for all males to become fathers, to insure the survival of the group. There is considerable disagreement as to the appropriateness of role

exchanges between males and females. To some, the lessening of rigid role definitions is a serious violation of mores, to others, it is a long overdue improvement. To a large degree, sex roles are the product of learned behavior. It is quite possible to modify behavior; it is equally possible to make grossly inaccurate projections about male and female behavior by examining role traits fround in proximity to indiviudals. Young children, even infants, are treated differently according to sex; this division, regardless of attempts to strive for neutrality and equality, is present because of the cultural pressures of the larger group. Every group, on the basis of external physiological characteristics, develops an arbitrary set of sex roles for its members.

ROLE CONFLICT occurs when more than one role message from the culture is received by the individual. When traits, expected behavior and attributes called for by the differing roles are contradictory or totally opposite, and when the individual has difficulty deciding which role to fulfill, or determining resolution, role conflict is said to exist. A consistent trend in contemporary society has been ROLE ACCELERATION, the process whereby roles change at such a rapid rate that individuals cannot readily determine their appropriate roles. There are a number of ROLE TRAITS (the unique cluster of behaviors, traits and attributes which set one role apart from others) associated with each role. ROLE ACQUISITION occurs in several ways. Sometimes roles

can be earned on the basis of behavior or performance--this is termed ACHIEVEMENT. Roles can also be transmitted by ASCRIPTION--through birth. Almost all roles are based upon RECIPROCITY. Through patterning, social roles and a variety of social interactions are assigned and coordinated within a group.

AGE ROLES are considered cultural universals; all groups designate specific traits and behaviors considered appropriate in association with the age of an individual. Many cultures assign differing status and values according to age categories. The lack of a clear agreement about age roles in contemporary cultures is one of the major differences between contemporary societies and primitive societies. AGE GRADING is the practice which designates broad groupings of societal members on the basis of their age. The system is somewhat like a ladder; members of each rung or age-set have specific rights, duties and obligations. Sometimes, cultures divide into individual groups based upon age similarities. This is termed an AGE-SET. The roles which age-set members can fulfill are then crystalized within their own sets. Entire age-sets change their position en masse. A rite of passage or initiation ceremony is the usual method for gaining entrance or moving to another level. Age grading is a formalized technique which some groups utilize to minimize friction in the assignment and division of roles. Some primitive groups had age grading for both males and females; others emphasized age grading only for the males within the group.

In any discussion of role it is important to distinguish between what might be termed a PERSONAL ROLE and a SOCIETAL ROLE. A personal role is a set of traits attached to an individual and no one else. A societal role tends to be much broader in scope; it embraces the idea of belonging to and having a designated place within a specific group, as contrasted to being an outsider. Group membership prepares the individual to function within society. The molding pressures which are exerted upon new members are designed to secure the continuation of values, attitudes, and the world-view of the group. Group membership facilitates the transmission of knowledge necessary to solving basic survival problems. The group exerts its molding influence via both subtle and overt manipulation of behavior. People are not static pieces of clay or dough; although different individuals are subjected to many of the same influences, they respond as individuals and exhibit some degree of variation even within a small group.

DEVIATION exists in all cultural groups. There are varying types of deviation. STATISTICAL DEVIATION is a mathematical concept which designates the extreme in either a high or low frequence of occurrence. LEGAL DEVIATION is the acknowledgment that the enacted law of a group has been violated. In addition, deviation can be either positive or negative. The star athlete and the honor student are examples of positive deviation. The alcoholic and the criminal are examples of negative deviation. The image of deviation

within contemporary culture is generally negative; the term tends to invoke a semantic set of ascribed or achieved roles which are undesirable, devalued or different.

All groups recognize that behavior models are frequently held up as ideals, and that humans are quite prone to falling short of the ideal. Many groups recognize that pressure to conform can have an unwanted effect upon the social world of a group. Social rituals are sometimes utilized as safety-valves to release pressure; they may entail mocking of ideal behavior or the violation of mores and folkways. Such mechanisms allow potentially destructive energy to be channeled and released in a socially approved fashion. Vestiges of this process remain in the carnival rituals in Rio and New Orleans. In both these cases, the citizenry is allowed to escape from everyday reality and to fabricate in union with others a world in which they appear to be in control. The deviation in these instances becomes institutionalized; to not participate makes one deviant.

Some forms of deviation are the product of SUB-CULTURAL EXPLOITATION. Large, complex societies frequently contain numerous sub-cultures. Not all sub-cultures share in the distribution of power within the larger society. The behavior patterns which are legally and socially expected usually come from the dominant culture. Most group members are enculturated to merge with their fellow sub-cultural members. Many sub-cultures are not able to equip their members with traits needed for success in the larger society.

As a consequence, their members are viewed as deviants. The power elite use sub-cultural diversity and manipulation of the powerless as a rationale upon which to base the continued exclusion of many groups from full economic and political participation in the larger society. In some societies, sub-cultural groupings are confined to a state of ANOMIE; i.e., they are powerless and in perpetual conflict with the larger culture.

As the individual merges with the culture, s/he becomes aware that even time and space are ordered. All cultural groups have methods whereby they organize categories for these two elements. Group members rely upon these organizational patterns for ease in interacting with one another. Mutual expectations of time and space allow group members to accomplish a wide variety of ritual and economic tasks and activities. All attempts to define the world in terms of space and time are the result of human classification. The ordering of the universe exists in the minds of humans; categories and taxonomies are created in order to manipulate information. Each culture imparts its own perception of space; as a consequence, all groups have terms which serve as REFERENCE POINTS. The stranger is not always aware of the way in which a group uses reference points; particular difficulty arises if the stranger is enculturated to observe phenomena which don't exist for the group being observed.

TERRITORIALITY is a concept which defines spatial control. The enclosure of a geographical area through

definition can be as absolute or concrete as a physical barrier. The presence of territoriality has been found in most cultural groups, ranging from a society's definition of a specific landmark as a ritual shrine, to the preservation of a waterhole or fishing or hunting ground. Some anthropologists argue that this behavior has socio-biological foundations. All complex societies place an emphasis upon territoriality. In contemporary society, this emphasis is extreme; a seemingly endless supply of maps, deeds and records designate boundaries, ownership and control. SOCIAL DISTANCE is related to personal space; the greater the proximity between an event and an individual, the greater the chance that s/he will react. Sometimes social distance is conveyed through language; the use of specific terms and the degree of formality between a speaker and the person being addressed helps convey the perceived degree of social distance between the interacting individuals. As a person learns a language, s/he also learns the perceptions of time and space which have been transmitted by the culture.

Performance Activities

Please fill in the blanks:

1. Anthropologists have long supported the idea that C_____ is the primary force in molding the individual.

2. S_____ of group members involves face to face interaction.

3. E_____ describes the process whereby group members are prepared through socialization and other ways for life within a society.

4. Normative S_____ are used to judge the behavior of the group or individual.

5. M_____ are traditional forms of behavior which are regarded as important.

6. F_____ are behavior patterns which are relatively commonplace.

7. Primitive cultures place considerable emphasis upon S_____-T_____ and oral tradition.

8. S_____ R_____ are an integral part of the process by which groups categorize behavior.

9. The D_____ of labor was traditionally based upon age and sex in most primitive cultures.

10. R_____ conflict occurs when more than one role message from the culture is received by an individual.

11. Role A_____ describes the process whereby roles change at a rapid rate.

12. The unique clusters of behavior which attach to roles are called Role I_____.

13. Role A_____ occurs in several ways.

14. Sometimes roles can be earned via performance; this is termed A_____.

15. Sometimes roles are bestowed on the basis of birth; this is termed A_____.

16. Almost all roles are based upon R_____.

17. Age G_____ is the practice which designates broad groupings of societal members based upon their age.

18. Age-S_____ are used to describe the smaller units which make up a society that practices age grading.

19. D_____ exists in all cultural groups.

20. S_____ deviation designates the extreme in either a high or low response range.

21. L_____ deviation is an acknowledgment that the enacted law of a group has been violated.

22. Sub-cultural E_____ exists when a sub-culture is taken advantage of by other groups within the larger society.

23. Reference P_____ are used by cultures to define relationships in time and space.

24. Social D_____ is related to personal space; the greater the proximity between an event and individual, the greater the chance that s/he will react.

25. T_____ is a concept which has become rather popular; it defines spatial control.

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